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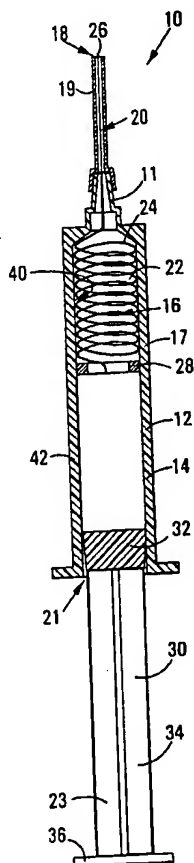
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[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: A METHOD OF FEEDING A SUTURE ELEMENT



(57) Abstract: This invention relates to a method of feeding a suture element (24), which method includes using fluid pressure to displace the suture element (24). The invention extends to a suture element feeding device (10) which includes a body (12) defining a fluid flow path (20) and a fluid inlet (502) whereby a fluid under pressure can be fed into the fluid flow path (20). The body (12) further defines a suture element inlet whereby a suture element (24) can be fed into the fluid flow path (20) for displacement along the fluid flow path (20) together with the fluid, and an outlet (18) whereby the fluid and suture element (24) can be fed from the device (10), the fluid flow path (20) connecting the fluid inlet (502), the suture element inlet and the outlet (18) in flow communication. The invention relates also to a medical implement.

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— before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

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1 July 2004

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/IB 03/04489-0

CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC⁷: A61B 17/04

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC⁷: A61B 17/00, 17/04

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

EPODOC, WPI

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5569270 A (E.E.Weng) 29 October 1996 (29.10.1996) <i>fig. 1,2,7A; abstract; column 1, line 63 - column 2, line 13; column 2, lines 45-60; column 3, lines 36-63; column 4, lines 28-36,45-52; column 4, line 66 - column 5, line 2; column 5, lines 41-53; claims 1,5,6,8-10.</i>	1-4,8,11
A	<i>the whole document.</i>	9,12

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

☒ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

„A“ document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

„E“ earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date

„L“ document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

„O“ document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

„P“ document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

„T“ later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

„X“ document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

„Y“ document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art

„&“ document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search
15 March 2004 (15.03.2004)

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/IB 03/04489-0

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This international search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☒ Claims Nos.: 19 - 22
because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
said claims rely only on references to the description and drawings and that is not permissible in accordance with PCT Rule 6.2.(a)
3. ☐ Claims Nos.:
because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims.
2. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.
3. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:
4. ☐ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.
☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/IB 03/04489-0

Patent document cited in search report			Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US	A	5569270	1996-10-29	none	